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Jacob Boehme and the spread
of his writings in England
during the Seventeenth Century

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JACOB BOEHME
AND THE SPREAD OF HIS WRITINGS IN ENGLAND
DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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BY

CARL JOSEPH BERGMAN
A. B. Augustana College, 1910

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Carl Joseph Bergman

ENTITLED *Jacob Boehme and the spread of his writings
in England during the seventeenth century.*

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

Julius Loebel
In Charge of Major Work

Julius Loebel
Head of Department

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Jacob Böhme was born of poor peasant parents at Alt - Seidenberg, a village near Görlitz, Germany, in the year 1575. He was sent to school and received there a scanty education, consisting chiefly of instruction in reading, writing, and religion. He was then apprenticed to a shoemaker and learned that trade, after which, according to the custom, he served as a traveling apprentice for about two years. After this he returned to Görlitz, where he married in 1599, and lived there the rest of his life.

It is said that Böhme as a child was grave and thoughtful beyond years. The world of German fairy tales nourished his fancy and became as real to him in his youth as religious visions in his later years. He was not in sympathy with his surroundings, and his tender temperament shrank from the dissolute life of his fellow-craftsmen. When he wandered about as an apprentice he had an opportunity to observe Christianity as it was preached and practiced at that time. Böhme, himself a Lutheran, heard the Lutherans denounce the Papists and the Calvinists, and he saw that sectarian quarrels took the place of the preaching of the Gospel. As before the reformation, dogmas were appealed to instead of the Bible in religious controversies. Böhme then became a diligent student of the Bible, for his inquiring mind was not satisfied with a superficial knowledge

or a dogmatic interpretation of the Scriptures.¹ But he also read many mystical and astrological books, as is shown in his writings, both by direct mention of the authors and by close similarity to works that were current at his time. In a letter to Caspar Lindner² he mentions Hans Weyrauch, Schwenckfeld and Weigel. In his *Aurora* (chap. XXV, p 43) he says: "Ja, lieber Leser, ich verstehe der Astrologorum Meinung auch wol, ich habe auch ein paar Zeilen in ihren Schrifften gelesen, und weiss wol wie sie den Lauf der Sonnen und Sternen schreiben, ich verachte es auch nicht, sondern halte es meisten Theil für gut und recht." Also in *Aurora* (chap. X, p 27): "Ich habe viel hoher Meister Schrifften gelesen, in Hoffnung den Grund und die rechte Tieffe darinnen zu finden, aber ich habe nichts funden als einen halb-todten Geist," etc. Erasmus Francisci, and opponent of Böhme and author of the "Gegenstrahl der Morgenröthe," noted more than thirty passages in Böhme, taken almost verbally from the works of Paracelsus.³ Many of Böhme's Greek and Latin terms were taken from such "scientific"

¹References for Böhme's life and character are: Moriz Carriere, *Die Philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationszeit*, pp. 310-419; and R. A. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, pp. 79-125.

²Jacob Böhme's *sämmtliche Werke*, Schiebeler. Vol. VII, No. 12, pp. 408, 409.

³Daniel Colberg, *Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christenthum*. Part I, p. 314.

books, although it is evident that he must have acquired some of them through his intercourse with his learned friends. He thus explains his use of strange words in his writings:¹ "Weil aber eine Clavis oder Schlüssel meiner Schriften von den Liebhabern begehret wird, so will ich ihnen gern zu Willen sein, und eine kurze Verfassung des Grundes darstellen wegen der fremden Wörter, welche theils aus der Natur, als aus dem Senu genommen sind, eines Theils auch fremder Meister Worte sind, welche ich nach dem Senu probiret und gut befunden habe."

It is characteristic of Böhme, as well as of other "Enthusiasts" of that time, that he was subject to visions, no doubt due to the great receptivity of his mind and his continual brooding over the deep problems of God and the universe. His first vision occurred when he was about twenty-five years of age, and, as he himself tells us, came to him, while he was gazing at a bright tin vessel which was struck by the rays of sunlight entering the room. He thus fell into a kind of trance in which he thought he saw the process of creation and received a revelation concerning the inmost secrets of nature. About ten years later he had a second vision of a like nature, and he

¹Jacob Böhme's sämmtliche Werke, Schiebler. Schlüssel, Vol. VI, p. 660.

determined to set down on paper for his own use what had thus been revealed to him. Accordingly he wrote his "Aurora oder die Morgenröthe im Aufgang" in the year 1613. The manuscript came into the hands of his friend, Carl von Ender, and through him Böhme's first work became known to several learned men who urged Böhme not to hide his talent. However, a copy of the manuscript finally reached the hands of the chief pastor of Görlitz, and he immediately condemned it as heretical. As a result of his agitation, the town council ordered Böhme to refrain from writing and he obeyed the order and remained silent for several years. But he was again persuaded to take up the work he had begun, and before his death, which occurred in 1624, he had produced a great number of works which were edited through the efforts of his friends. His chief writings and the dates of their appearance are as follows: ¹

1613, Aurora, oder Morgenröthe im Aufgang;

1619, Von den drei Prinzipien des göttlichen Wesens nebst dem Anhang vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen;

1620, Vierzig Fragen von der Seele nebst dem Anhang Das umgewandte Auge;

----- Von der Menschwerdung Jesu Christi;

----- Sechs theosophische Punkte;

¹Johann Eduard Erdmann, Geschichte der Philosophie. Vol. I, p. 533.*

- Sechs mystische Punkte;
- Vom irdischen und himmlischen Mysteriorum;
- 1621, Von vier Complexionen;
- Schutzschrift wider Balthasar Tilcken;
- Zwei Streitschriften gegen Esaias Stiefel;
- 1622, Signatura rerum;
- Von wahrer Busse;
- Von Wahrer Gelassenheit;
- Vom übersinnlichen Leben;
- Von der Wiedergeburt;
- Von der göttlichen Beschaulichkeit. (Die letzten fünf wurden ohne sein Vorwissen unter dem Gesamttitel: Weg zu Christo, 1623 gedruckt).
- 1623, Von der Gnadenwahl;
- Von der heiligen Taufe;
- Vom heiligen Abendmahl;
- Mysteriorum magnum;
- 1624, Gespräch einer erleuchteten und unerleuchteten Seele;
- Vom heiligen Gebet;
- Tafeln von den drei Prinzipien göttlicher Offenbarung;
- Clavis oder Schlüssel der vornehmsten Punkte;
- einhundertundsiebenundsiebzig theosophische Fragen;
- 1618-1624, Theosophische Sendbriefe.

Böhme's writings and teachings spread very quickly and reached a great number of people even before his death.

He had many personal friends, and as his letters show, most of them were men of high position and influence. Schiebeler's edition of Böhme contains sixty-six theosophical letters, and of these fifty-three are written to nineteen men whose names are given, the names of those to whom the other thirteen were written are not found in these letters. The contents of the letters show that Böhme was considered an authority in spiritual matters, and that his friends took interest in his books and asked for additional information concerning these books or certain points in them.

In "die Allgemeine deutsche Biographie" we find the following concerning the spread of Böhme's writings in Germany and Holland:"¹ Böhmes mehr praktische Schriften fanden sehr bald, besonders in Schlesien und in Sachsen, ein grösseres Publicum, seine eigentlich philosophischen oder theosophischen Arbeiten hatten sich dagegen zunächst doch nur des Beifalls einzelner Männer zu erfreuen, unter denen aber ein Dr. Balthasar Walther durch persönliche Thätigkeit, Abraham von Frankenberg, Dr. Frederick Krause, Johann Theodor von Tschesch, der bekannte Peter Poiret, Johannes Angelius Werdenhagen, der Schweizer Nikolaus Tschäper auch durch eigene Schriften für deren näheres Verständniss und ihre Verbreitung eifrig thätig waren. Ein wohlhabender Kaufmann in Amsterdam, Heinrich Betke oder Beets, übergab nach und nach die meisten Schriften Böhmes dem Druck, und Abraham Wilhelmsson von Beyerland übersetzte sie ins

¹Allgemeine deutsche Biographie, Vol. III, p. 71.
Article by Hamburger.

Niederdeutsche." Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710), founder of the society of Angel Brethren, became acquainted with Böhme's writings in Amsterdam. He said of them that he venerated them as highly as the Bible, "was in dieser räthselhaft ist, lösen sie auf."¹ With the aid of a former professor of Theology at Haderwijk, Alhardt de Raedt, and with the financial support of the rich mayor of Amsterdam, Coenraad van Beuningen, Gichtel was able to give the public a complete and highly ornamental edition of Böhme's works, in the year 1682.

Jacob Böhme's works and teachings were spread also in England. It is not definitely known how the English people first became acquainted with his writings, but we know from the preceding that his works were well known in Germany and Holland, and we also know that there was a lively intercourse between certain sects in England and those on the continent, especially the Baptists,² and it is therefore reasonable to suppose both that English sectarians had come in touch with Böhme's teachings in Holland or Germany and that Dutch Baptists had brought his writings from the continent to England. Concerning this we will quote the following from Weingarten:³

¹Hauck-Herzog, Realencyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche. Vol. VI, p. 659. Article by Hegler.

²See A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher von der Reformation der englischen Kirche.

³Herman Weingarten, Die Revolutionskirchen Englands. p. 445.

"Denn Holland war nach seinem glorreichen Befreiungskampf nicht nur das Asyl der Glaubens- und Gewissensfreiheit, die "Freistätte, in der Juden aus Spanien und Portugal, wie Spinoza's Eltern, Socinianer aus Polen, wie Samuel Crell, Hugenotten und Jansenisten aus Frankreich Zuflucht fanden, wo ein Cartesius, Spinoza, Becker, Bayle und Clericus schreiben konnten,"¹ sondern auch das Land, in welchem die aus Deutschland verdrängten religiösen Richtungen ihre Fortbildung fanden, von wo aus sie den Uebergang nach England gewannen. Auch für das Täuferthum was hier der fruchtbarste Boden." Most of Böhme's works were translated into English in the years between 1644 and 1662, and a list of these translations and their complete titles is given below, compiled from the Catalogue of the British Museum.

Translations of Jacob Boehme:

The tree of Christian Faith: being a true information how a man may be one spirit with God, and what man must do to perform the works of God. London, 1644. 4o.

Two theosophical Epistles: wherein the life of a true Christian is describedWhereunto is added, a dialogue between an enlightened and a distressed soule. By Jacob Bohmen. Englished out of the German language.

London, 1645. 12o.

The Second Booke. Concerning the three Principles of the Divine Essence of the eternall, dark, light and temporary

¹3. Lechler, Geschichte des englischen Deismus. P. 152.

world, etc. [Translated by J. Sparrow.] London, 1648. 12o.

The Way to Christ discovered, etc. London, 1648. 12o.

The Epistles of Jacob Behmen aliter Teutonicus
Philosophus. Translated out of the German Language [by
J. E. i. e. John Ellistone]. (A reall and unfeigned testi-
mony concerning J. Behme. Translated out of High Dutch.)
A warning from J. Beem to such as reade his writ-
ings. London, 1649. 4o.

Signatura Rerum, or the signature of all things,
shewing the sign and signification of the severall forms
and shapes in the creation, and what the beginning, ruin
and cure of everything is, etc. [Translated with preface
and postscript, by J. Ellistone.]

London, 1651. 4o.

Of Christ's Testaments, viz:-Baptisme and the Sup-
per..... Englished by J. Sparrow. London, 1652. 4o.

A consideration upon the booke of E. Stiefel of the
threefold state of man, and his new birth. (A theosophick
epistle, or letter, wherein the life of a true Christian
is described, etc.) London, 1653. 16o.

A consolatory treatise of the Four Complexions, that
is, an instruction in the time of temptation, for a sad
and assaulted heart, etc. [Translated by C. Hotham.]
London, 1654. 12o.

Mysterium Magnum; or, An exposition of the first
Book of Moses, called Genesis. [Translated by J. Ellistone

and J. Sparrow.]To which is added, The life of the author (by D. Hotham) and his four tables of Divine Revelation (Englished by H. B[unden]). London, 1654. fol.

Concerning the Election of Grace: or of God's will towards man, commonly called predestinationWritten in the German tongue by J. Behme. [Translated by J. Sparrow.] London, 1655. 4o.

Aurora. That is, the day-spring or dawning of the day in the Orient or morning-rednesse in the rising of the sun. That is the root or mother of philosophie, astrologie and theologie from the true ground. Or a description of nature, etc. [Translated from the German by J. Sparrow.] London, 1656. 4o.

Several Treatises of Jacob Boehme
1. A Book of the Great six points: as also a small book of other six points. 2. The 177, theosophick Questions: the first thirteen, answered5. Of divine Vision. To which are annexed the exposition of the table of the three principles: also an epistle of the knowledge of God, and of all thingsEnglished by J. Sparrow. 8 pt. Few M S. Notes. London, 1661. 4o.

The remainder of books written by Jacob Behme, viz.-
1. The first Apologie to B. Tyloken, etc. II. The second Apologie, in answer to B. Tyloken.....VII. Twenty-five epistles more than the 35 formerly printed in English, and

1 of Dr. C. Weisner's, relating much of J. B.'s life.

Englished by J. Sparrow.

London, 1662. 4o.

We will now briefly speak of those who translated Böhme's works and also of some of his other adherents in England, and we shall see that most of these were men of learning and influence. John Sparrow was the foremost among Böhme's translators. He practised law in London and had formerly been an officer in the army of Cromwell. Sparrow was a great admirer of Jacob Böhme, and it is said that he used to write his name thus: "Joannes Sparrow Amator τῆς Θεοσοφίας καὶ Φιλοσοφίας Jacobii Boehme, Teutonicæ."¹

That Sparrow was learned, especially as regards biblical matters, is shown in his preface to the translation of the Election of Grace, where, among other things, he discusses the oldest extant Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible and the part Ezra took in giving the biblical books to the Jews after the return from the Babylonian captivity.² He rejoices "that God hath bestowed so great a Gift and Endowment upon this Brother of Ours, Jacob Behm, that he should by his writings lead us in such a simple childish way to

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher von der Reformation der englischen Kirche. P. 920.

²Concerning the Election of Grace. "To the Reader."

understand the Scriptures of the Holy Prophets and Apostles so Comfortably, Fundamentally and Convincingly; and that I should be used as an Instrument of publishing so much of this Authours Divine Writings, in English."¹ One of Sparrow's relatives, John Ellistone, cooperated with him in translating Böhme, and some books, e. g. the Epistles and Signatura Rerum, were translated through his own efforts. He died in 1652, before all of the translations were finished.²

Among those that first helped to make Böhme's works known should also be included the bookseller Humphrey Blunden, who published several of Böhme's translations. At the bottom of the title page of the "Three Principles" we read: "London; Printed by M. S. for H. Blunden at the Castle in Cornhill." Blunden also learnt the German language and translated the "Four tables of Divine Revelation," which were printed together with the "Mysterium Magnum." He was one of the best early friends of Richard Baxter, who in his "History of his own time" tells that as early as 1634 he had known a bookseller by name Humphrey Blunden who later had Jacob Böhme's works translated and printed. He calls him a pious, honest, and intelligent young man, whom he had loved

¹ibid.

²A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v. d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche.

very much and from whom he had received services on different occasions.¹ This Blunden and another man by name Ludwig Loid sold Böhme's books openly in their stores near the London exchange.²

One of the most important of Böhme's admirers was Charles Hotham (1615-1672), born of a prominent English family. He studied at the University of Cambridge and received there his academic degrees. He was appointed fellow of Peter's College and was later one of the administrators of the University.³ In 1646 he delivered a discourse in the schools at Cambridge, and it was published in 1648 and printed by the above mentioned Blunden. It was printed in pamphlet form and had the following title: "Ad Philosophiam Teutonicam Manuductio: seu Determinatio de origine animae humanae, videlicet: An a Deo creetur & infundatur? an a Parentibus traducatur? habita Cantabrigiae in Scholis publicis in comitiis Martii 3. 1646 a Carolo Hotham, socio Petrensi, & tunc uno e procuratoribus Academiae." This pamphlet was dedicated to the chancellor, the senate, and to the students of Cambridge in general and abounds in praise of the Teutonic Philosophy. It also contained some

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v.d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche. P. 923.

²ibid. P. 924.

³Diet. of Nat. Biography. Vol. XXV pp. 404, 405. Article by C. W. Sutton.

commendatory verses by Henry More, giving his opinion of the philosophy of Böhme.¹ It was translated into English 1650 by Durand Hotham, a brother of Charles. The fact that Hotham delivered this discourse, and its appearance in print, show, as A. W. Böhme points out,² that Jacob Böhme's works were quite well known among educated men of that time and that his teachings were openly defended before university teachers and students.

Since the above mentioned pamphlet is very rare we will reproduce below Henry More's commendatory verses and Hotham's reply to them, and also the latter's dedication of the pamphlet to the University.

"Ad amicum suum charissimum Carolum Hotham, virum omnigena eruditione & virtute illustrissimum, de suae obscurissimae Philosophi Teutonici sapientiae descriptione.

Non scio Teutonice, bone Carole, scribe te ipsum.

Atque tuum pingas, si potes, ingenium
Hothami scribas, propriosque exponito sensus:

Sic animum rapiet pagina docta meum.

Quidquid enim pietas, atque alta silentia mentis,

Alternans tacitas consiliumque vices:

Quidquid et auratis amor entheus intima pennis

¹ibid. P. 925.

²ibid.

Pectora dulce movens suggerit, illa quidem
Omnia credo tuos exornatura libellos,

Scribere si propria mente manuque velis.
At nos ignoti tenebrosa per avia campi

Dum duois misere, heu! horreo et obstupeo.
Sed simul atque fidem adspicio morumque tuorum
Candorem, in subitum nox abit atra diem.

Dum mores vitamque tuam contemplor in ista
Nocte nihil metuo posse latere mali
Ingenium recolens penetrabile, protinus inde
Magnum aliquod condi his suspicor in tenebris.

H. More."

"Ad amicissimum suum virumque clarissimum de obscuritate
Teutonica Responsum Autoris.

Candide Teutonicas horrescit More tenebras?

Has nictanti oculo lux inimica facit,
Hac Pater omnipotens faciem mortalibus abdit,
Scilicet hunc proprii luminis umbra tegit,
Et sol conspicui dum scandit culmina coeli,
Ora oculosque minax igne micante domat.
At mundi artificem nobis haec fabrica monstrat,
Et Phoebum placidae vultus amoenus aquae.
Teutonicum jubar trepidis mitescet ocellis,

Dum properante meas lumine mulcet aquas.
At tibi, qui proprio radians e vortice, Phoebus
Alter, Apollineas spargis ab ore faces.
Noster Olympiacas liquescit Phoebus in auras
Solque, viam niveam stellula parva, subit."

From the dedication in Hotham's pamphlet:

"Aperte loquar, quae sentio. Quidquid vel effatus est de tripode ter maximus Hermes; vel Pythagoras dixit, vel asseruit Aristoteles: Quidquid denique vaticinatus est divinus Plato, vel probavit Plotinus; haec omnia, aut his augustiorem longe ac profundiores Philosophiam, puto Teutonicis scriptis reconditam: Et (quod haec omnia superat) (si quo concordi vinculo Regina illa ac Domina sacrarum literarum sapientia, cum ancillula sua pervicaci, h. e. Ratione humana, sociari conciliarique fas sit,) felix Animae Spiritusque conjugium, hanc exoptatissimam epharmosin, hanc mirabilem discordium harmoniam, Teutonicus nobis exhibit: Hoc tantum Theosophone fraudi detur, si quod olim Plotino (teste Mirandulano) obligit, scilicet a Platonicis etiam sudantibus, saepe haud intelligi potuisse, item ¹ huic non raro obtingat fatum."

Hotham's enthusiasm for Böhme is thus shown in his dedication of the pamphlet and in his answer to H. More's verses. More objected to Böhme on account of the obscure

¹or idem

language and strange words in his writings. Hotham excuses this obscurity of language and introduction of unknown words in the preface to the "four Complexions," which he published in 1654. Among other things he says of Böhme: "This divine author has not affected the strange-sounding expressions but has been compelled to use them, since the matters of which he wrote were so remote from the human imagination, by which the words are dictated. The idea of Plato, the Entelechy of Aristoteles, the AEon and Crater of Trismegistus, the Intellectiles and Jynges of Zoroaster, Hochmah and Binah of the Cabbalists, are words which nowadays are understood by few; and yet no intelligent person is wont to ridicule these as useless fancies. The Chemist, the Logician and the Physician have (to avoid lengthy enumerations) liberty to coin all kinds of technical terms, which also within their different domains pass as customary: Yea, the common artisan may boldly avail himself of this advantage; Why should then a man at once be considered a barbarian, if he cannot clothe his wisdom in German or French?"¹— From all these activities of Charles Hotham we may judge that he was the foremost of the early advocates of Böhme in England. His brother, Durand Hotham, published a biography of Böhme in 1654, for which the above named

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v.d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche. P. 929.

Blunden furnished the necessary books and other material. It appeared together with the "Mysterium Magnum" and the "four Complexions."

About the time when Böhme's works were published in England there appeared also other works, which were recommended as illustrating and explaining his books. Among these was a pamphlet, called "Magia Adamica," treating of the antiquity of magic, of the heavenly chaos of the Magi, and the first matter of all things. Another one was called: "Lumen de lumine, or the discovery of a new magic light. The chemical key, with which the doctrine of Corruption and Generation can be closed and opened." There also appeared "Mercurius Teutonicus," containing certain prophecies chiefly concerning the last times, which prophecies had been collected from Böhme's works by an admirer of the Teutonic philosophy. Another man wrote a lengthy allegory, in which Jacob Böhme's doctrines are graphically represented in the form of a hieroglyphic figure. The title is: "Mundorum explicatio; or explanation of a hieroglyphic figure, representing the mystery of the outer, inner, and eternal world." To the book is also prefaced a poem containing a eulogy of Jacob Böhme and his interpreter John Sparrow.¹

To give further examples of this kind of literature we will mention an anonymous treatise, published in 1651, in

¹ ibid. p. 923.

which the author tries to prove that the capability to perform wonders and other extraordinary gifts had not fully ceased. After he had cited different persons who had lived both in England and without, and who in the opinion of the author had had miraculous gifts, he speaks thus of Jacob Böhme in particular: "As for the Teutonic Philosopher, who was a cow-herdsman at first and later was put in the shoe-making trade, he has truly shown himself as a wonder in all wisdom and knowledge. What miracles would he not have performed if he had found people whose faith had reached his or become united with it? What secret or arcanum is indeed to be found, whether in the natural, moral or divine philosophy, which he has not fully apprehended, and that without study or books? this is a self-evident fact to those who read his books with an unprejudiced eye. Although, to be sure, it appears at first sight rather hard to arrive at his meaning: Which, however, is not so very difficult, unless the god of this world has blinded the understanding. --The difficulties are due not as much to the style as to the depth of things: as well as to the readers themselves, who, since they are only natural men, do not understand what the Spirit of God is, but say as some of their fellow-disciples: "This is a hard saying," and will therefore have nothing more to do with him."¹

¹ibid. P. 930.

This unknown author also gives the opinion of king Charles I concerning Jacob Böhme. He had read the "forty questions concerning the soul," and he said that if the author had not studied he would believe that the Holy Ghost possessed him: but if he had been a learned man, then such a book was one of the best inventions he had ever read.¹

Another enthusiastic student of Böhme in the latter half of the seventeenth century was Edward Taylor, who was an Englishman by birth but lived in Dublin, Ireland, towards the close of his life, where he died in 1684. It is to be noted that he was a member of the church of England, from which he did not separate. His manuscripts which are concerned with Böhme's teachings were brought to London after his death and printed in 1691 under the following title: "Jacob Behmens theosophic philosophy explained: in several considerations and demonstrations; in which are shown the truth and usefulness of the doctrines contained in the writings of this divinely taught author. To which are added extracts from the most important treatises of the Author, and an answer to those Theosophical Questions that were left unanswered at the death of Jacob Behmen: Together with a short description of J. B.'s life." This book, A. W. Böhme states, was generally recommended by the lovers

¹ibid. P. 931. Allgemeine deutsche Biographie. Vol. III. p. 71. Article by Hamberger.

of Böhme's writings on account of its clearness.¹

Among the disciples of Böhme in England should also be included John Pordage, rector of Bradfield. He is commonly called Dr. Pordage, because he had assumed the degree of Doctor of Medicine in his earlier years and also practised as physician for some time. His theological and philosophical views are contained in his work "Theologia Mystica et Metaphysica," which was also translated into German.² He was charged before the Ministers' Committee with teaching "many wild things which had no proper connection with the doctrines of Böhme."³ This committee consisted of a certain number of commissioners or examiners, appointed by Cromwell, whose duty it was to summon ministers before them and to investigate their conduct and ability impartially, for the purpose of removing those who on any grounds were considered unfit to retain their offices. In the year 1654 Pordage was accused before this committee and had to undergo a very severe examination on the various points that were brought up against him. The following year Pordage published a defense called: "Innocence shining forth through the mist of alleged guilt. Or a detailed and true account of the unjust and unjustifiable actions, which the commissioners

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v.d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche. P. 932.

²ibid. P. 932.

³John Hunt, Religious thought in England. P. 240, note.

(who are appointed for the removal of scandalous and incompetent ministers) have committed against Pordage at Bradfield in Berkshire."¹ His chief accuser was Christopher Fowler, minister of Reading, also in Berkshire. He also related the whole of the proceedings against Pordage, with his apology, in a book called: "Daemonium Meridianum, or: A candid and impartial account of the proceedings, which the commissioners in Berkshire have undertaken against John Pordage, etc."² Pordage is said to have claimed that he had communion with angels, and that he could know good or bad spirits by sight or smell. Richard Baxter says that Pordage and his family, by which he seems to mean those of the same belief, lived together in communion.³

Thomas Bromley (1629-1691) a friend of Pordage, is also to be counted as one of the chief adherents of Böhme. He was born in Worcester of an ancient and prominent family, and studied at the University of Oxford. Being already as a boy controlled by strong religious impulses, he devoted himself to the study of theology.⁴ He was a diligent student of the scriptures and tried to give a spiritual interpretation of a number of Hebrew names in the Old Testament and apply it to the inner life, as is to be seen in a treatise which

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v.d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche. P.933.

²ibid P. 933. John Hunt, Rel. thought in England. P. 240, note.

³ibid.

⁴Hauck-Herzog, Realencyclopädie für prot. Theol. und Kirche. Vol. III, p. 417. Article by Buddensieg.

he wrote concerning the journeys of the children of Israel.¹ He was elected fellow of All Souls' College but had to leave the university in 1660, since he as a non-conformist refused to subscribe to the Anglican liturgy. Buddensieg thus expresses the case of Bromley:² "Infolge einer schweren Erkrankung "völlig wiedergeboren" und dem subjektivischen Zuge des die Universität beherrschenden Independentismus folgend, ging er seine eigenen Wege, die ihn, nachdem er Jakob Böhmes Schriften kennen gelernt, auf die Abwege einer krankhaft-dissoluten Mystik führten. Bald ging er über den Meister, aus "dessen Brünnelein er zu Anfang geschöpft und seinen Grund wohl innegehabt," hinaus. In dieser Zeit beherrschte ihn die schwarmgeistige Idee vom inneren Licht, er verwarf das Recht der Kirche, das normative Ansehen der Schrift und die Ehe, die er als geringeren, des Heiligen nicht würdigen Lebensstand herabsetzte, ohne dass sich für ihn daraus die widerwärtigen Konsequenzen der späteren Inspirirten, Zioniten, Gichtelianer und Butlarschen Rotten ergaben." His works were collected and published in English in 1710 through an Anglican minister, they were also, together with a biography of the author, published in Low German at Amsterdam in 1712.³

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bucher v.d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche. P.934.

²Hauck-Herzog, Realencyclopädie für prot. Theol. und Kirche. Vol. III, p. 417.

³ibid.

About 1650 Pordage and Bromley, with a small circle of friends, formed a kind of mystical or theosophical society. In 1652 they became acquainted with Mrs. Jane Leade, a mystically inclined woman who claimed she had visions and trances, and these ideas were still further increased through her study of Jacob Böhme's writings, which during that period began to appear in print.¹ She became one of the chief members of this circle which about 1660 was organized as the Philadelphian Society. This society was governed through her Laws or Paradise and ceased to exist shortly after her death, which occurred in 1704.²

William Acov, a doctor of medicine, who in 1660 published the life of Tauler in the English language, showed a great enthusiasm for Böhme's writings. He said towards the close of his life that he would spend the rest of his time in the study of Böhme's works. To the objection concerning the obscurity of the author's language he answered that this obscurity is not as much in the books of the author as in the reader who begins reading them without the proper preparation.

The philosopher Henry More, whom we mentioned in connection with Charles Hotham, was also well acquainted with Böhme's works. He was one of the commissioners in the

¹ibid. Vol. XI, p. 327. Article by Arnold Rüegg.

²ibid. Vol. III, pp. 417, 418. Article by Buddensieg.

³A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v.d. Ref. d. eng. Kirche. P. 934.

Ministers' Committee before whom Pordage and other Philadelphians were tried. Although he was expected to oppose the Philadelphians and the doctrines of Böhme, yet after a closer study of this author he gave up the Cartesian philosophy of which he had before been an adherent.¹

The above examples have been collected to show during what period Böhme's works entered England and were translated and published in the English language, how the works first spread in England, how they were received, who the foremost advocates were, and of what standing these were. It has been seen that the majority of them were men of importance in church and state and not simple-minded, credulous persons. The manner of appearance of Böhme's works in England is parallel with their first appearance in Germany, where learned men were the first to embrace his teachings and provide for the dissemination of his writings.² Concerning this Colberg quotes as follows:³ Kan demnach wohl seyn, dass einige hohe Stands-Personen in Franckreich, Polen, Moscau, vornemlich Engeland, ja gar zu Rom diese Schriften für einen Schatz achten, in fremde Sprachen übersetzen, und sich derer wohl zu bedienen wissen, wie Kuhlmann im

¹Allgemeine deutsche Biogr. Vol. III, p. 71. Article by Hamberger.

²See pp. 6 & 7, this thesis.

³D. Colberg, Das Platonische-Hermetische Christentum. Part I, p. 322.

Neubegeisterten Böhmen c. 6. p. 44. aus Abr. von Franckenberg bezeuget." It should not, however, be ignored that Böhme's teachings spread also to the common people, although this fact is hard to prove on account of the maze of sects with which England was troubled during the seventeenth century, according to the statements of the "heresiographers" of that time. Edwards enumerates sixteen sects, Bastwick forty, and according to Reggius the sects were innumerable.¹

It is an open question whether the followers of Böhme formed any distinct sect. The following is the opinion of Hunt:² "From the translations made at this time of Jacob Böhme's writings we may conclude that he had many readers, probably disciples, in England. But it is difficult to determine with certainty if his followers in England could be definitely marked off from some other sects which resembled them. Under the vague name of Ranters, Seekers, Familists, and Behmenists were included many persons who did not form distinct sects." This author also states that the Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists were the three tolerated sects during the Long Parliament and the Protectorate of Cromwell.³ A. W. Böhme's statement is to the same effect:

¹H. Baumgarten, Die Revolutionskirchen Englands. P. 102, note.

²John Hunt, Rel. thought in England. Vol. I, pp.239,240.

³ibid. Vol. I, p. 234.

"Ob zwar Jacob Böhme wie bekant ist, keine besondere Secte gestiftet, sondern in der Lutherischen Kirche gebohren und gestorben ist. So haben doch etliche Engländische Scribenten die Böhmisten, fürnehmlich da ihrer so viel waren, unter die Sectirer der damahligen Zeit gesetzt. Wir verstehen hier durch Böhmisten, diejenigen, die Jacob Böhms Bücher und Principia in England geliebet, und bekandt gemacht haben; als welcher Leute damahls sehr viel gewesen sind."¹ According to this statement all of the above named persons would be included in the category of Behmenists.

But if it cannot be shown that the Behmenists formed a sect of any importance, it is still certain that his works were read and his teachings taken up by adherents of other sects, both in England and outside of it. Daniel Colberg, an opponent of Böhme, speaking of the spread of Böhme's works, states:² "Zu dem finden sich an allen Orten unter Gelehrten und Ungelehrten, einige Paracelsisten, Alchymisten, Weigelianer, Rosencreutzer, Widertäufer, Quäcker, derer Glaube mit des Böhmen Schrifften überein kommt, welche sie mit grossen Freuden auffgenommen, und als Wunder-Schrifften, andern curicusen, und im Glaubens-Grund unerfahrenen Leuten recommendiret, die andere mit derselben Neusucht angestecket."

¹A. W. Böhme, Acht Bücher v.d.Ref. der eng. Kirche. P. 920.

²Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christenthum. Part I, p. 322.

Jacob Böhme's "Aurora" was read diligently in the Parliamentary army,¹ and his works were the chief books bought by the followers of Fox, as is affirmed by Lodowick Muggleton, a contemporary of Fox, in his book "Looking Glass for G. Fox."² The same is affirmed by Colberg, who refers to Henry More for this information. "Wie hoch die Quäcker Jacob Böhmen mit seinen Theosophischen, vielmehr Platonischen Schriften halten, und wie diese zu jenem Ursprung geholfen, kan in Henrici Mori, eines Englischen Theologi, Schriften gelesen werden."³ An English writer, Lewis H. Behrens, also connects Jacob Böhme's name and works with the origin of the Quaker movement. "Between the years 1644-1662 the works of the German mystic Jakob Boehme were translated into English. All Winstantley's theological pamphlets were published in the year 1648-1649, to which year the origin of the Quaker doctrines is generally attributed."⁴

The above direct references to Böhme's works in England have been gathered from as many sources as have been available and show the popularity that these works enjoyed among the English people, and especially among the dissenters or non-conformists. Böhme was without a doubt one of the foremost

¹H. Weingarten, Die Revolutionskirchen Englands, P. 100.

²Dictionary of Nat. Biogr. Vol. XX, p. 118. Article by Alexander Gordon.

³D. Colberg, Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christenthum. Part I, p. 292.

⁴L. H. Behrens, The Digger Movement. Winstantley. P. 43, note.

exponents of German mysticism, and German mysticism, as Weingarten points out,¹ was a great factor in the reformation, not only on the continent but also in England. The rise of so many sects after the reformation shows a revolt against the dogmatism and intolerance of the Lutherans and the Calvinists, who then had the political control of the protestant countries. The sectarians were striving for religious liberty and freedom from the interference of political authority in religious matters, and since Böhme stood for just these principles we can to some extent account for the popularity of Böhme among so many of the sects.

¹H. Weingarten, Die Revolutionskirchen Englands.

Milton and Böhme

The purpose of the following will be to investigate the acquaintance of the poet John Milton with the works and teachings of Jacob Böhme, and the bearing these had upon the development of his thought as shown in his writings, and especially his poetical productions. The chief evidence of Milton's acquaintance with Böhme's works is found in Todd's Life of John Milton,¹ where the author compares Milton's views concerning ministers of the Gospel, as expressed in his "Christian Doctrine" and his "Considerations, etc.," with those expressed by an unknown writer in an address to the Parliament in 1653,² "preserved too among the ³ papers of Milton, and upon which it should seem that he had cast an eye of fond regard; the eighth proposition in this address being as follows: "That it may be lawful for all men, of what degree or quality soever, to teach the Word, according to their light and the Spirit's illumination, and to settle themselves in the ministry, giving good testimony of their inward call thereunto by the Spirit." Again, in the chapter before us,⁴ "Pastors and teachers are the gift of the same God

¹See account of the Life and Writings of John Milton, by the Rev. H. J. Todd. London, 1826. (Pages 335-337)

²Owing to the importance of the passage, the following, though lengthy, is quoted in full.

³Note f by Todd: Original Letters and Papers of State, etc. found among the political collections of Mr. John Milton, ut supr. p. 100.

⁴This refers to the chapter "Of the Visible Church," in Milton's Treatise on Christian Doctrine. See Todd's "Life of Milton," p. 335.

who gave apostles and prophets, and not of any human institution whatever." So in the Considerations¹ before cited, "It is a foul error, though too much believed among us, to think that the university makes a minister of the Gospel: what it may conduce to other arts and sciences, I dispute not now; but that which makes fit a minister, the Scripture can best inform us to be only from above, whence also we are bid to seek them." Here the address, with which Milton accords in the preceding extract, courteously notices both universities; and proposes,² "that two colleges in each should be set apart for such as wholly and solely apply themselves to the study of attaining and enjoying the spirit of our Lord Jesus, to which study needs few bookes, or outward human helps; so that only the Holy Scriptures would be sufficient; but that the noble mind of man soaring beyond the letter or rule held out from the same, therefore the workes of Jacob Behmen, and such like, who had true revelation from the true Spirit, would be a great furtherance thereto! And none but the Holy Scriptures, and such bookes aforesaid, should be used in these colleges, all in English. This study rightly attained, would confute and confound the pride and vaine glory of outward human learning, strong reason, and high astral parts, and would shew men the true ground and depth of all things; for it would lead men into the true nothing.

¹Underscored words and passages are printed in italics in the original.

²Note g by Todd: Original Lett. ut supr. p. 99.

in which they may behold and speculate all things to a clear satisfaction and contentedness!" Such was the modulated improvement of academical institutions, in the age of triumphant fanaticism, not quite in unison with the present¹ disesteem of them by Milton; a circumstance too curious to be overpassed."

So far Todd. We will now examine the importance of the passage just quoted. It shows, first of all, that Böhme's teachings were openly advocated before a political body of men, since the address mentioned was delivered before Parliament. The fact that this address was found among the papers of Milton shows that he must have valued the contents thereof very highly, and Todd is therefore justified in saying that it would seem that Milton "had cast an eye of fond regard" upon it, especially since he proves that Milton, in several of his writings, accords with this address and expresses his opinions in harmony with it. Furthermore, this extract shows that Milton must have known of Böhme, and in order to accord with an address in which Böhme's works were recommended, it is very unlikely that such an inquiring mind as Milton's should have rested satisfied with the mere mention of an author's name and a few characteristics of his person and his writings. We have therefore every right to suppose that Milton was acquainted

¹Note h by Todd: His severity against them is more strongly shewn at the close of his Considerations to remove Hirelings out of the Church.

²See pages 8 and 9 of this thesis.

with Böhme's works and that he had read at least part of his writings that were translated into English. The date of the address is 1653, and, as is seen from the list of the translations of Böhme,¹ seven or eight of his books had been published in English before the close of that year, and these books did not include all of the more important works, such as the *Aurora* or the *Mysterium Magnum*. If Milton had had his attention called to the works of Böhme in 1653 or earlier it is very likely that he read also these books and the remainder of the translations in English, but there might also be a possibility that he had read them in the original or in Dutch. Masson, in his *Life of Milton*,¹ speaks of the friendship of Milton and Roger Williams, and quotes a statement from the latter to the effect that Milton learnt Dutch from Williams and in return taught him Hebrew. At that time, as often later, the word "Dutch" was used also instead of "German," which can be seen on the title page of the translation of "The Epistles of Jacob Behmen"² where "High Dutch" is used to mean "High German." The statement of Williams will admit of a possibility that Milton knew German, although the contrary is generally held.

It will now be our purpose to make a brief comparison

¹David Masson, *The Life of John Milton and History of his time*. - Vol. III, page 531.

²See page 9 of this thesis.

between Böhme and Milton as regards identity of thought and similarity of expression in their writings. They were both opposed to the dogmatism and intolerance of the prevalent church factions in their respective countries and to the interference of political authority in matters of religion, and they advocated the principles of political and religious liberty. Böhme, although he never separated from the Lutheran church, was too liberal to be bound within its narrow limits. That he was too broad for this church is shown by the persecution he had to suffer, especially from Gregory Richter, pastor at Görlitz, and from the council of this town. It is also shown by the bitter opposition to his teachings, found in many works intended to be refutations of his writings. This opposition is seen in Colberg's "Das Platonisch - Hermetische Christenthum," in which Böhme is considered as having formed a sect of his own.¹ Colberg refutes the teachings of Böhme in the second part of his book, and he also mentions several others that had refuted his writings.² And still Böhme, as the more recognized reformers, claimed the Bible as the source of his teachings, but in addition also the so called "inner light," an idea that played so great a part in the mystical sects of that time. - Milton also was out of harmony with the church parties in England. He was

¹Daniel Colberg, Part I, pp. 307-328.

²ibid. Part I, pp. 327, 328.

brought up as a Puritan, but Toland in his Biography of the poet tells us that Milton in his youth belonged to the Presbyterians, and then to the Independents and the Baptists, but later renounced all connection with the churches.¹ He studied dogmatic theology but it did not satisfy him, its scholastic definitions seemed to him sophisms and its traditional interpretations seemed affected. He would not accept external authority in matters of faith, but preferred original search for truth, and the result of his investigations was his extensive treatise on Christian doctrine, drawn from the Bible only. Even Milton was counted among the sectaries on account of the liberal views expressed in his treatise on Divorce; this sect was called the "Divorceers."² Todd says concerning Milton's religious attitude:³ "This avowal of his religious sentiments certainly exhibits the great poet at variance not only with the doctrine of the Church of England, but at variance with the tenets of sects to which he had yielded assent, and at variance with himself." And, as Bishop Newton remarks:⁴ "if he was of any denomination, he was a sort of Quietist, and was full of the interior of religion, though he so little regarded the exterior." This inwardness of religion was also emphasized

¹Hermann Weingarten, Die Revolutionskirchen Englands. P. 78.

²ibid. P. 103.

David Masson, Life of Milton, Vol. III, pp.155,186-189.

³H. J. Todd, Life and writings of Milton. P. 307.

⁴Quoted by Todd, Life of Milton. P. 333.

by Böhme, and this similarity of the characteristics of these two men will answer the question as to whether Milton could like Böhme's writings.

Those of Böhme's works to which we shall have occasion to refer most often, are the translations of his "Three Principles,"¹ the "Election of Grace,"² and the "Epistles."³ In referring to Milton's views we shall make use of his "Paradise Lost" (abbr. P. L.) almost exclusively, but before touching upon this larger work we will compare extracts from his "Considerations to remove Hirelings from the Church" with passages from Böhme.

In his "Considerations" Milton gives his opinion concerning ministers that are unfit and those that are fit to serve in the church, and contends that universities and much learning can not make a fit minister. Thus he says that "the Gospel makes no difference from the magistrate himself to the meanest artificer, if God evidently favour him with spiritual gifts." We can compare with this what Böhme says, speaking of the meaning of the term "Ternarius Sanctus": "17. Not according to the understanding of the Latine Tongue, but according to the understanding of the Divine Nature;-- --- though indeed it is hidden to the Historicall Man of the Schooles of this world, yet it is wholly comprehensible to those that are enlightened from God, who then also understand

¹See p. 8 of this thesis.

²ibid. p. 10.

³ibid. p. 9.

the source [or working property] of the Spirit in the Letter," etc.¹

Milton's severity against learning and against the clergy is also shown at the close of his Consideratio s:
"I have thus at large examined the usual pretences of hirelings, coloured over most commonly with the cause of learning and universities; as if with divines learning stood and fell, wherein for the most part their pittance is so small; and, to speak freely, it were much better there were not one divine in the universities, no school - divinity known, the idle sophistry of monks, the canker of religion; and that they who intended to be ministers, were trained up in the church only by the scripture, and in the original languages thereof at school; without fetching the compass of other arts and sciences, more than what they can well learn at secondary leisure, and at home." He also states that those who first taught the Gospel were poor, unlearned men, as also the hearers, and continues thus: "Hence we may conclude, if men be not all their life-time under a teacher to learn logic, natural philosophy, ethics, or mathematics, which are more difficult, that certainly it is not necessary to the attainment of Christian knowledge, that men should sit all their life long at the feet of a pulpited divine; while he, a lollard indeed over his elbow cushion,

¹Three Principles, P. 393, 17.

In these references the second number indicates the paragraph in the translation.

in almost the seventh part of forty or fifty years teaches
then scarce half the principles of religion;" etc. --Place
this beside the following passages of Böhme: "16. I have
therefore been desirous to warne you, and tell you before-
hand, that you must not looke upon flesh and bloud in these
high things, nor upon the wordly wisdom of the Universities,
or high Schooles: but that you should consider, that this
wisdom is planted and sown by God himselfe in the first,
and last, and in all Men: and you need only to returne with
the Prodigall lost Sonne to the Father, and then he will
cloath you with a new Garment, and put a seale-ring upon the
hand of your minde:" etc.¹ "36. The Glosses that are put
upon Moses from Reason, will now shew you Paradise, much
lesse the Creator. The Prophets and Apostles learned more
in the Paradisicall Schoole in one houre, than the Doctors
in their Schooles in thirty years: Ones own wisdom availeth
nothing: God giveth it to him whom he loveth for nothing.
It cannot be bought for money nor favour, as King Solomon
will tell you."² — "11. Therefore let every one take care
what he doth: I say againe; that whosoever he be that in-
trudeth himselfe to be a Pastour [or Shepherd] without the
Divine Calling, without the knowledge of God, he is a theefe
and a murtherer, he entreth not through the doore into

¹Three Principles, P. 19, 16.

²Three Principles, P. 62, 36.

Paradise, but creepeth in with the dogges and the wolves," etc.¹ These lines of Milton will also fit in here:²

"So clomb this first grand Thief into God's fold:

So since into his Church lewd hirelings climb."

We will next examine passages from Milton in which he pleads for religious liberty and deplores the intolerance and degeneration of the church. Thus in his Considerations: "And lest it be thought that, these revenues withdrawn and better employed, the magistrate ought instead to settle by statute some maintenance of ministers, let this be considered first, that it concerns every man's conscience to what religion he contributes; and that the civil magistrate is entrusted with civil rights only, not with conscience, which can have no deputy or representer of itself, but one of the same mind." This plea for liberty of conscience can be compared with Böhme's complaint against the prevailing intolerance: "35. Hearken thou Antichristian scorner: it is not enough for thee to stand and say; I have the true ground of the knowledge [that leadeth] to the Kingdome of Heaven? I have found the true Religion; and doest condemne every one that hath not thy knowledge, or doth not consent to thy opinion: thou sayest such a one is a Heretick, and of the Devill;" etc.³ "Besides, they forbid him that hath eyes to

¹Three Pr. P. 68, 11.

²P. L. IV, 11. 192, 193.

³Three Pr. P. 291, 35.

sec. none must search into it, [if they doe] they are called Enthusiasts, and are cryed out upon for Novellists [such as broach new opinions and pretend new Lights] and for Hereticks."¹ The broadness of his tolerance is shown when he says: "64. O how wholly of meere [Mercy and] Grace hath God the Father given us his Sonne, who hath taken upon him our transgressions, and reconciled him in his Anger; All Men are invited to this Grace, of what condition soever they are, they may all come, whether they be Turkes, Jewes, Heathens, or Christians, or what name soever they are called by, none are excluded."²

A rather lengthy passage from *Paradise Lost* will next be considered, in which Milton laments the intolerance and corruption of the Church:³

"Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
To their own vile advantages shall turn
Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
With superstitions and traditions taint,
Left only in those written records pure,
Though not but by the Spirit understood.
Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
Places, and titles, and with these to join
Secular power, though feigning still to act

¹ibid. P. 316, 78.

²ibid. P. 359, 64.

³p. L. XII, ll. 508-537.

By spiritual; to themselves appropriating
The Spirit of God, promised alike and given
To all believers; and, from that pretence,
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
On every conscience - laws which none shall find
Left them enrolled, or what the Spirit within
Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then
But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
His consort, Liberty? what but unbuild
His living temples, built by faith to stand -
Their own faith, not another's? for, on Earth,
Who against faith and conscience can be heard
Infallible? Yet many will presume:
Whence heavy persecution shall arise
On all who in their worship persevere
Of Spirit and Truth; the rest, far greater part,
Will deem in outward rites and specious forms
Religion satisfied; Truth shall retire
Bestuck with slanderous darts, and works of Faith
Rarely be found."

Most of these points are found paralleled in Böhme:

"2. O you high Priests and Scribes, what answer will you
make to Christ, when you shall be found thus [at his coming]?
-----You are not all Shepherds or Pastours, but in-
truded covetous Wolves; you relie on your Schoole - Art
[or University Learning and Schollership] : O that availeth

nothing in the presence of God."¹ -- "13. When wee consider with our selves, the many Sects, and Controversies in Religion, and from whence, they come and take their Originall: it is as cleere as the Sunne, and it manifesteth it selfe indeed, and in truth: for there are great Warres and Insurrections stirred up for the cause of [Religion or] Faith: and there ariseth great hatred and envy about it, and they persecute one another for opinions sakes; because another is not of his opinion, he sticks not to say, he is of the Devill; and this is yet the greatest Misery of all, that this is done by the Learned in the high Schooles [or Universities] of this world."² "18. But when the Saints comprised their Doctrine in Writings, that thereby in their absence it might be understood what they taught; then the World fell upon it, and every one desired to be such a Teacher, and thought the Art, skill, and knowledge stuck in the Letter: thither they came running, old and new, who for the most part onely stuck in the Old Man, and had no knowledge of God: and so taught according to their own conceits, from the written words: and expounded them according to their own meanings. 19. And when they saw that great respect and honor was given to the Teachers, they fell to ambition, pride, and greedinesse of money: for the simple people brought them

¹Three Pr. P. 322, 2.

²ibid. P. 373, 13.

presents or gifts, and they thought that the Holy Ghost dwelt in the Teachers, whereas the Devill of pride lodged in them."¹-- "24. Now when the Historicall Christendome, and the true Christians grew together, the Scepter was alwayes among the Learned, who exalted themselves, and made themselves potent, and great, and the simple [Church] yielded to it as right: and yet there was a desire after the Kingdome of God found in Men, viz. the Noble Word of God (which had imprinted it selfe in the Promise [in Paradise] in the Light of Life, and which was made stirring by Christ) that drave them indeed to the feare of God. And then they built great Houses of Stone, and called every one thither, and they said that the Holy Ghost was powerfull there, and they must come thither: besides, they durst be so impudent to say (when they were found to be so wicked and malicious) that the Holy Ghost was powerfully in the mouth of the wicked."²

The passage from Milton's Paradise Lost is taken from the last part of the twelfth book and is a part of the archangel Michael's prophecy concerning the course of the world, the fate of man, and the advance and decline of the Christian church. Comparing this with the extracts quoted from Böhme's Three Principles we find a number of ideas which are common to both authors. We might point out the following: After the Apostles had established the church and had

¹ibid. P. 374, 18, 19.

²ibid. P. 376, 24.

their committed teachings to writing, false teachers succeeded them. These were greedy for wealth and sought to acquire secular power, they added superstition and tradition to the writings of the apostles,¹ they looked upon the letter of the scriptures instead of the spirit, and their worship was therefore confined to outward rites and ceremonies. They claimed to act by spiritual power and thought that they alone had the spirit to interpret the scriptures, although this Spirit was given to each and every believer. These priests bound the consciences of men with their laws and decrees, and enforced these by temporal power. -- These are, in brief, the leading thoughts contained in the passages quoted both from Böhme and Milton. In Milton these thoughts are expressed in form of the angel's prophecy of what is to happen to the church, and in Böhme they are expressed in form of an historical sketch of the church and its degeneration before the reformation. Böhme's severity against the corrupt church and clergy is expressed even more strongly than that of Milton. This is shown especially in the Three Principles, where numerous examples of this severity are found.²

While we are considering their ideas of liberty and revolt against religious tyranny, we shall speak also of

¹Cf. Böhme, Three Pr. P. 377, 27, 28.

²For further examples see pp. 11,5,6,7; 139,39; 195,38; 223,35; 228,56; 230; 231; 241,8; 257,10; 278,100; 285,7-9; 287-291; 373-378.

their views concerning political liberty and their attitude towards the oppression of government. Milton's opposition to political tyranny is well known and is no doubt better shown in his prose writings, but we shall here add some quotations from Paradise Lost bearing on the same subject. The following shows his ideal of a ruler:¹

"God and Nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest and excels
Them whom he governs."

He opposes an absolute monarchy and the Divine Right of Kings:²

"He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl,
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation: but man over men
He made not lord - such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free."

Milton makes the archangel Michael thus explain the rise of tyranny to Adam before he leaves Eden:³

"Justly thou abhorr'st
That son, who on the quiet state of men
Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue
Rational liberty; yet know withal,
Since thy original lapse, true liberty
Is lost, which always with right reason dwells

¹p. L. VI, ll. 176-178.

²p. L. XII, ll. 67-71.

³p. L. XII, ll. 79-100.

Twinned, and from her hath no diuidual being.
Reason in Man obscured, or not obeyed
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From Reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free. Therefore, since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God, in judgment just,
Subjects him from without to violent lords,
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom. Tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.
Yet sometimes nations will decline so low
From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong,
But justice and some fatal curse annexed,
Deprives them of their outward liberty."

We will now quote passages from Böhme, giving his opinion of the rise of tyranny and his complaint against the oppression of the poor.

"40. And so it is seene how the Providence of God is come to the help of the Kingdome of this world: and hath by the Spirit of this world stirred up Rulers; who have inflicted punishment; yet the Spirit of God complaineth of them, that they are turned Tyrants, who suppress all with their power: and the Abellish Church in love consist not therein, but the strong might of God, for the suppressing of

evill Doers. 41. It is true indeed, the Judges and Kings, as also Princes and Rulers [or Magistrates] are the Officers of God in the house of this [foure Elementary] world, whom God (because of sinne) hath set to punish secretly, that thereby the wicked drivers [and oppressours] might be stopped. -----

43. But a true Judge, who judgeth according to righteousness, he is Gods Steward [Viceroy or Vicegerent] in the Kingdome of this world; ----- he is Great in the Kingdome of Heaven; for he beareth the [sword] for righteousness, and he shineth, as the Sunne and Moone, exceeding the Starres.

44. But if he turne tyrant, and doth nothing but devour the bread of his subjects: and onely adorneth his state and dignity in pride, to the oppression of the needy, and hunteth after nothing but covetousnesse, accounting the needy to be but his dogges, and placeth his Office onely in voluptuousnesse, and will not heare the oppressed; then he is an insulting, tormenting Prince and Ruler in the Kingdome of Antichrist, and is the number of Tyrants, and he rideth upon Antichrists Horse."¹

Böhme speaks further of the relation of a tyrannical master and the poor, and mentions also the revolt of the latter: "and if he squeeze out the sweat of his browes, so that it smarteth, (which his Master consumeth [or spendeth])then

¹Böhme, Three Princ. 292, 293: 40, 41, 43, 44.

he groweth impatient with his Master, and curseth him, and seeketh out wayes of lying and deceit, and by what way he might make his heavy burthen lighter. 33. And then if he finde his Master so unjust, he riseth up against him, and taketh away his unrighteous Bread, which he thinketh to eate under a soft yoake, and worrieth him to the uttermost, and leaveth him no time to escape, but sticketh full of impatience under that heavy burthen: he grumoleth and maⁿdereth, and seeketh all evill devices to ease his yoake, that he might eate his bread in quietnesse, and yet it will not be, the Driver [Hunter, cruell Tyrant his Master] is behinde him, and taketh away his bread, and feedeth him with sorrow under his yoake." 1 --"He hath beaten down the Conscience of the simple-hearted in his good meaning: he hath invented Rights, which in his Lawes, serve to promote his deceit, contrary to the light of Nature: all reproach and Blasphemies have subsisted in his strength and authority, whereby he hath terrified the simple-hearted, that his power might be great." 2

After having thus compared Milton and Bühne as regards their thoughts on religious and political liberty and their opposition to oppression and intolerance, we will proceed to examine certain ideas of a supernatural character and see how far the two authors agree with regard to these. We

¹Three Pr. P. 262, 32, 33. See also pp. 263, 34-36:

²Three Pr. P. 357, 55. See also pp. 357, 56; 275, 89.

will first consider the ideas of God and the creation.

In Paradise Lost the archangel Michael speaks to Adam:¹

"O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not depraved from good, created all
Such to perfection; one first matter all,
Endued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and, in things that live, of life;
But more refined, more spirituous and pure,
As nearer to him placed or nearer tending
Each in their several active spheres assigned,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind."

²"Eternal King; thee Author of all being,
Fountain of light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st
Throned inaccessible;"

Compare these passages with similar ones from Böhme, where he speaks of creation and of God as the source of all things. "In such a serious Consideration he ³ will presently finde, that he and all the Creatures that are, come all from God."⁴---"Being we are now to speak of God, what he is, and where he is, we must say, that God himselfe is the Essence of all Essences; for all is Generated or borne,

¹P. L. V, 11.469-479.

²P. L. III, 11.374-377.

³Mar.

⁴Three Princ. Author's Preface, page a.

Created and proceeded from him, and all things take their first beginning out of God."¹---"For God hath made no Devill out of himselfe, but Angels to live in Joy, to their comfort and rejoycing: yet it is seene that Devils came to be, and that they became Gods enemies; therefore the source or fountaine of the Cause must be sought, viz. What is the Prima Materia, or first Matter of Evill, and that in the Originalnesse of God as well as in the Creatures; for it is all but one onely thing in the Originalnesse: All is out of God, made out of his Essence."²---"46. But the Angels and the Devils, as also the soul of man, are meerly and purely, out of the same Spirit."³ ---"13. Thus it may very plainly be understood, that the light of God is a cause of all things."⁴ ---"21. Thus you [may] see how God created all things out of nothing, but onely out of himselfe: -----God is onely the Light, and the vertue of Light, and that which goeth forth out of the Light is the Holy Ghost"⁵---The above quotations from Böhme have been selected out of a great number of similar passages and show plainly an identity of thought with Milton in the fundamental conceptions of God and creation. All things and all beings have their origin in God, even the evil things and evil

¹ibid. p. 1, 1.

²ibid. p. 2, 5.

³ibid. p. 26, 46.

⁴ibid. p. 48, 13.

⁵ibid. p. 50, 21.

spirits, which are "depraved from good," as Milton expresses it. There is one first matter or essence with several qualities. Both Milton and Böhme speak of God as light.

Concerning God's dominion over all regions, even in Hell, Milton makes the prince Beelzebub say:¹

"For He, be sure,
In highth or depth, still first and last will reign
Sole king, and of his kingdom lose no part
By our revolt, but over Hell extend
His empire, and with iron sceptre rule
Us here, as with his golden those in Heaven."

Böhme expresses the same thought thus:

"19. The true Heaven, wherein God dwelleth, is all over, in all places [or corners] even in the midst [or Centre] of the Earth: He comprehendeth the Hell where the Devils dwell, and there is nothing without God."²

Milton speaks of a Paradise within man as a compensation for the lost external Paradise in Eden:

"Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,
By name so come called Charity, the soul
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loth

¹P. L. II, ll. 323-328.

²Three Princ. p. 50, 19.

To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier far."¹

Böhmé also speaks of a Heaven within:

"77. Thou wilt say, How? God dwelleth in Heaven.
O! thou blinde Minde, full of Darkness; the Heaven where
God dwelleth is also in thee, as Adam was both upon Earth,
and also in Paradise at once."²---"-----all the three
principles with the Eternity are in you, and the holy
Paradise is again generated in you, wherein God dwelleth:
then ^hwere will you seek for God? seek him in your soule
onely, that is proceeded out of the eternall Nature."³

Nor is hell necessarily any special place outside of
man. Thus in Paradise Lost:

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven"⁴

"Horror and doubt distract
His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
The hell within him; for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step, no more than from himself, can fly
By change of place."⁵

So also in Böhmé: "67. Therefore the soule (when it departeth
from the body) needeth not goe farre: for at that place where

¹P. L. XII, ll. 583-587.

²Three Pr. p. 203, 77.

³ibid. p. 49, 15. See also Epistles, p. 178, 13.

⁴I, ll. 254, 255.

⁵ibid. IV, ll. 18-23. See also IV, l. 75, IX, ll. 467, 468

the body dyeth, there is Heaven and Hell:" etc.¹ --"68. So also, it is with the dammed, [soule,] when the body breaketh, the soule needeth no flying forth, or departing far away: it remaineth in that which is outermost without the foure Elements, etc.²

We also find a trace of the idea of divine light in Paradise Lost, when Milton reminds the reader of his own blindness:

"So much the rather thou, Celestial light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate; there plant eyes; all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight." ³

"what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;" ⁴

This expression "divine light" recurs again and again in Böhme:

"1. Because there belongeth a divine light to the knowledge and apprehension of this; and that without the divine light there is no comprehensibility at all of the Divine Essence: therefore I will a little represent the hidden secret in a creaturely manner, that thereby the reader

¹Three Princ. p. 254, 67.

²ibid. p. 255, 68.

³p. L. III, ll. 51-55.

⁴ibid. I, ll. 22, 23.

may come into the depth."¹---"84. Behold, in this standeth the strife, that Reason, in its Dimnesse of Opinion, without the Divine Light is Folly in the sight of God; and knoweth not what God is."² ---"16. And if we see in his light, then we must declare his wonders, and manifest and praise his glorious Name, and not bury our Talent in the Earth; for we must deliver it unto our Master with Increase; he will require an account of us, how we have Traded with it; and without knowledge, or certaine illumination from God, no man must presume to judge, or be a Doctor, or Master in the great Mystery; for it is not committed to, or commanded him, but he must labour to attaine the true light, and then he goeth rightly to worke in the Schoole of God."³

Milton and Böhme agree on the question of predestination and free will, contrary to the doctrines of Calvin:

"They, therefore, as to right belonged
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if Predestination overruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge. They themselves decreed

¹Three Pr. p. 5, 1.

²Election of Grace, p. 60, 84.

³Epistles, p. 50, 16. For further examples see Three Princ. pp. 237, 93; 240, 5; 333, 45; 389, 2. Epistles, p.177,7.

their own revolt, not I."¹

"no decree of mine,
Concurring to necessitate his fall,
Or touch with lightest moment of impulse
His free will, to her own inclining left
In even scale."²

Böhm expresses the same thought in the following question:

"60. Now tell me here Reason: where the predestinate purpose and Will of God to the hardening of Man existeth: where is the predestinate purpose, whereby he hath in his predestinate purpose ordained one part to Damnation and the other to Externall Life?"³

—Milton speaks further of free will:

"Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand?
Thous hadst."⁴

"Happiness in his power left free to will,
Left to his own free will, his will though free
Yet mutable."⁵

"but to persevere
He left it in thy power - ordained thy will
By nature free, not over-ruled by fate

¹P. L. III, ll. 111-117.

²P. L. X, ll. 43-47.

³Election of Grace, p. 72, 60. See also Election c. G. pp. 52, 1-30; 60, 84, 85. Three Prin. p. 213, 113.

⁴P. L. IV, ll. 66, 67.

⁵ibid. V, ll. 235-237.

Inextricable, or strict necessity."¹

"But God left free the Will; for what obeys
Reason is free; and Reason he made right."²

"for how

Can hearts not free be tried whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?"³

And to quote further from Böhme: "53. For how would God
Else Judge the Creature, if it do onely that which it must
inevitably do, if it had no Free-Will?"⁴ --- "God with-
draweth himselfe from none: Man hath a free will, he may
lay hold on what he will: but he is held by two (by Heaven
and by Hell) to which he yeeldeth, he is in that."⁵

In describing the fall of man both Milton and Böhme
follow the Bible account closely, although Böhme permits
more speculation; but here also we find traces of independent
similarity. In Paradise Lost Milton describes the trembling
and pain of Nature at the fall:

"So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
Forth-reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat.
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe

¹ibid. V, ll. 525-528.

²ibid. IX, ll. 351, 352.

³ibid. V, ll. 531-534.

⁴Election of Grace. p. 57, 53.

⁵Three Pr. p. 270, 62. See also Election of G. p. 40,
124-140.

That all was lost."¹

"Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan;
Sky loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal Sin
Original." ²

This is very similarly expressed by Böhme:

"33. So shee pulled off an apple and did eate, and gave to Adam also, and he eate of it likewise. That was a bit to which the Heavens might well have blushed, and the Paradise have trembled, as it was indeed really done, as is to be seene at the Death of Christ, (when he entered into Death, and wrestled with Hell,) that the Earth and the Elements trembled, and the light of the Sunne was darkened, when this bit of the Apple was to be healed up."³

A great number of other descriptions pertaining to the fall of man also show a great similarity of thought and expression. Of these we will mention Satan's repentance and shame at the fall,⁴ the Devil and his connection with the Serpent,⁵ the Devil exulting over the victory won when man

¹p. L. IX, ll. 780-784.

²ibid IX, ll. 1000-1004.

³Three Pr. p. 193, 33.

⁴p. L. IV, ll. 41-45.)

IV, ll. 93, 94) Cf. Böhme, Election of Grace,
IX, ll. 162-172.) p. 39, 117-112.

⁵p. L. X, ll. 504 ff. - Cf. Böhme, Three Pr. 209, 210:
99, 100.

had fallen,¹ and the archangel Michael's invective against Satan, compared with Böhme's "Recept vor dem schwarzen Teufel."²

We will now lastly enumerate other miscellaneous passages of the two authors, showing some similarity of thought. Thus, a spirit of opposition to war is found in both.³ The influence of stars and constellations upon human events is believed in by both Milton and Böhme.⁴ They frequently use the word "Quintessence"⁵ and other alchemistic terms, and we find in Milton numerous echoes of notions of cosmogony⁶ which are so plentiful in most of Böhme's works. Neither denies that a beast has reason, thus in P. L.:

"for in their looks

Much reason, and in their actions, oft appears."⁷

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- ¹p. L. X, ll. 460 ff. Cf. Böhme, Thres. Princ. 200, 63; 209, 26.
²p. L. VI, ll. 262-280.) Cf. Jakob Böhme's sämtliche Werke, II, ll. 378-386.) Schiebler's ed. Vol. VI, p. 435, 45.
³p. L. II, ll. 496-505.) IX, ll. 27-41.) Cf. Böhme, Thres. Princ. XI, ll. 691-697.) p. 386; 31, 32. XII, ll. 30-37.)
⁴p. L. IV, ll. 665-675.) VII, l. 375.) Cf. Böhme, Thres. Princ. VIII, ll. 511-513.) pages (22, 23. 105, 23. (35, 15. 131, 4. (63, 39. 143, 55. (65, 45. 158, 24. X, ll. 656-664.)
⁵p. L. III, 714-719.) VII, 243-245.) Cf. Böhme, Thres. Princ. III, 600-612.) pages (20, 19. (46, 8. (79, 10. (157, 15. (166, 50-52. V, 404-426.) V, 438-443.)
⁶p. L. II, 894-897; V, 180-184; XI, 50-57; X, 656-664; VII, 98-103; VII, 211-215; II, 937, 938; II, 910-916.
⁷p. L. IX, 558, 559.

Böhme says that "Every Beast hath a minde, having a will, and the five sense therein, so that it can distinguish therein what is good or ill for it."¹

Milton conjectures that the earth might be as a shadow of Heaven:²

"though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein
Each to other like more than on Earth is thought!"

And Böhme makes a statement to the same effect: "50. For every Element hath its own inhabiting Spirits, according to the quality of that Element, which are a Shadow Image and the resemblance of the Eternal."³

We also find a comparison between Joshua and Jesus, in Paraisie Lost:

"But Joshua whom the Gentiles Jesus call,
His name and office bearing who shall quell
The adversary Serpent, and bring back
Through the world's wilderness long-wandered Man
Safe to eternal Paradise of rest."⁴

In the Three Principles:

"27. Whereas Joshua was an Image and similitude, that Israel (because they could not subsist in the Father's clarity

¹Three Principles, p. 181, 29.

²p. L. V, ll. 574-576.

³Election of Grace, p. 45, 50.

⁴p. L. XII, ll. 310-314.

and love) should be led by the second Joshua (or Jesus) out of the wrath into the Love, through the breaking of his body, and entering into Death. Moses must enter through Death into life, and bring his clarity, through Death into life: even as he appeared with Elias, on mount ^kTabor, to the second Joshua (or Jesus), in the claritie of the Father, and shewed him the pleasure of the Father, [viz.] that he (the second Joshua) should bring Israel (through his Death and clarity) into the Promise Land of Paradise."¹ --It is to be observed that these last two passages correspond very closely, not only in thought but also in the choice of words and phrases.

Conclusion.

As was stated in the beginning of this part of the thesis, the purpose of this second part was to make a brief comparison between certain works of John Milton and those of Böhme's works that had been published in England before Paradise Lost was written. Three of the chief books translated were accessible, namely the Three Principles, the Epistles, and the Election of Grace. After a comparative study of the two authors has been made, the greater part of the result has been set down in the preceding pages in as brief a form as possible. The investigation has consisted chiefly in collecting passages on different topics from both

¹Three Pr. p. 261, 27.

authors, taking care to make the quotations complete enough to make the meaning clear, but also sufficiently brief to exclude irrelevant material. The passages quoted from Milton show a great resemblance in meaning, and in the majority of cases also a close similarity of expression to those selected from Böhme. This can evidently not be considered accidental, especially since Milton wrote his Paradise Lost after most of Böhme's work had been published in England in translation, even if he had not read them in the original. In conclusion we will therefore say that this investigation has shown that John Milton had studied Jacob Böhme's works and that these had to a great extent molded Milton's thought as expressed in his writings.

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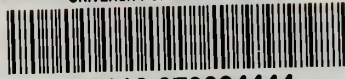
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